

Safety Last

M. Litvinov employed his time in London in negotiating a series of non-aggression pacts between the U.S.S.R. and neighbouring states. These pacts, though they won him many compliments at the time, have proved no more remunerative than the World Economic Conference itself, whose sessions M. Litvinov was attending while he negotiated them. His presence at a lunch given at 10, Downing Street by the Prime Minister, led the *Morning Post* to complain that a slug had found its way into 'our fine English rose'.

Germany was represented at the Conference by, among others, Dr. Alfred Hugenberg,⁷ an eccentric newspaper proprietor and Krupps director, who had become Economics Minister in Hitler's first Cabinet, a coalition of Nazis and Nationalists which took office some five months before the Conference opened. A memorandum he submitted provided a striking, but scarcely welcome, contrast to the other delegates' platitudinous utterances. It quoted Spengler with gusto, insisted on the importance of racial considerations, claimed the return of Germany's former colonies, and envisaged German expansion eastwards at the expense of the U.S.S.R. Such ideas, now familiar enough, then were regarded as too extravagant to be taken seriously, and aroused more astonishment than concern. The German Government hurriedly explained that Dr. Hugenberg was expressing only his own personal opinions; his memorandum was withdrawn, and he returned to Berlin, his uneasy partnership with Hitler soon to terminate. 'When wood is planed shavings fly/ he had remarked in the course of a speech justifying his collabora-

tion with National Socialists, and insisting that the rights and ideals of the Nationalists he claimed to represent would be safeguarded. He was right, shavings did fly, and he was a shaving,

⁷ He is felicitously described in Mr. R. T. Clarke's *The Fall of the German Republic* as combining *the appearance of a hoary, genial, but beardless Santa Claus with ruthless greed for power, unscrupulousness in method, and profound contempt for that large section of the Nationalist leaders whose long tradition still inhibited them from adopting the moral standards of big business.*